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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 9, 2003

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Frequent showers brought ample moisture to all areas except parts of the southern Peninsula during the week of March 2 through 8. Rainfall ranged from no rain in Miami to nearly four inches at Daytona Beach with several localities receiving one to almost three inches. Drier areas included Bradenton, Homestead and some areas around Immokalee. Temperatures in the major cities averaged from one to eleven degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 60s, 70s and 80s with Miami and West Palm Beach reporting at least one high in the 90s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 50s and 60s with Pensacola and Tallahassee recording at least one low in the 40s. Storms crossing the Panhandle and the northern and central Peninsula on Sunday, March 9 dumped an additional two thirds to nearly three inches of rain with most southern Peninsula areas escaping the heavy showers.

FIELD CROPS: The rains replenished topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies over most of the Panhandle and the Peninsula with supplies rated mostly adequate. Several Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities reported surplus supplies while some southern Peninsula areas reported short to very short supplies. Wet soils are delaying corn, soybean and tobacco planting in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. The warmer temperatures and adequate moisture are spurring the growth of small grains. Sugarcane harvesting continues in the Everglades with the recent rains causing only minor delays.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	10	10	0	10	5	0
Short	30	35	31	25	35	37
Adequate	40	45	66	60	55	62
Surplus	20	10	3	5	5	1

VEGETABLES: Soggy soils are slowing potato digging and causing rot in some fields with most acreage adequately draining off excess moisture. Wet fields are slowing land preparations for the planting of watermelons and other vegetables in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. Mostly drier weather around Dover allowed strawberry harvesting to continue at a normal pace. Cabbage harvesting is increasing to meet the mid-March holiday demand. Mostly drier conditions in the Palmetto-Ruskin, Immokalee and Homestead areas permitted vegetable planting and harvesting to proceed with few delays. Vegetables available include snap beans, carrots, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries, tomatoes and very light supplies of cucumbers.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern counties, winter forage is growing rapidly following the rains and warmer temperatures. Some ponds have standing water for the first time in a few years. Oats forage damaged by virus appear to be recovering. Some pastures are flooded and some ryegrass and small grain forage are too wet to apply fertilizer. In the central areas, winter forage condition improved due to warmer temperatures and

rain. In the southern areas, pasture condition is poor to fair. State-wide, the condition of the cattle is fair to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	15	15	5	0
Fair	55	70	45	60
Good	30	15	50	40
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Spring weather covered virtually all of Florida's citrus belt this week. Warm, sunny days and mild nights were the rule until Friday when a slow moving cold front brought showers and cloudy skies to most areas for the entire weekend. There was very little actual rain except for a few of the northern citrus counties which got around an inch of the much needed moisture. The warm temperatures helped flush a lot of new growth and abundant bloom flowers on trees of all ages. Peak uniform bloom could be reached this coming week. Trees are in very good to excellent condition in all areas. Most growers and caretakers are irrigating to maintain optimum tree condition during the all-important bloom cycle. Total rainfall for most counties for the first two months of 2003 continues to be below average. Very few crops of early and midseason oranges remain to be picked. Valencia harvest is increasing with most of these coming from the central and lower interior groves. Processors are using most of these early Valencias with some of the lower acid fruit going to the fresh trade. Grapefruit movement continues to be active with most of this fruit coming from the lower east coast. Honey tangerines and Temples are still being picked in most areas for both fresh and process use. Tangelos are just about over for this season.

Caretakers are very busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to help stimulate new growth and bloom buds. Hedging and topping are active in all areas in harvested groves. Dead trees are being pushed, stacked and burned. Resets are being planted in the larger groves with irrigation. A few growers have started post bloom nutritional spraying.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 23	Mar 2	Mar 9
Navel oranges	36,000	22,000	6,000
Early & Mid oranges	3,972,000	1,146,000	397,000
Valencia oranges	661,000	1,282,000	2,560,000
All grapefruit	1,915,000	1,865,000	2,497,000
Early tangerines	2,000	1,000	0
Honey tangerines	109,000	117,000	125,000
Tangelos	9,000	5,000	2,000
Temples	116,000	91,000	103,000

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In cooperation with the Florida Cooperative Extension Service whose county directors participate in supplying field information.